



# CATAWBA COUNTY

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Public Health

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## 2007 COMMUNITY ASSESSMENT IDENTIFIES FOUR HEALTH PRIORITIES

Catawba County Public Health, in collaboration with thirty organizations, recently assessed Catawba County's strengths and weaknesses as it relates to the health of the community. A community health assessment was conducted by identifying significant health data trends and gathering information from diverse groups, youth, and area health experts. After reviewing data, surveys, findings from focus groups and other information, the following health priorities were determined: Access to Health Care for uninsured adults, Childhood Obesity, Substance Abuse, and Cancer.

**Access to Health Care** was once again chosen as a health priority due to Catawba County having over 17,000 adults living without health insurance. Tremendous progress has been made since this issue was identified in 2004. The number of primary care visits at free or reduced clinics has increased 26% from 2004-2006 allowing more people to receive medical care. Future actions will also focus on transportation, communication, and medication needs.

Because being **overweight and obesity** are primary risk factors for the leading causes of death and disability, childhood obesity will continue as a priority. State data from 2006 indicates that more Catawba County children ages 2-20 (24%) are overweight as compared to the North Carolina average (17%). Over the last couple of years there has been an emphasis on implementing classroom curriculums around physical activity and nutrition, healthy after school programs, and offering healthier food options in the school. These efforts will be continued along with a focus on families in the community and churches in order to make a comprehensive impact.

With nearly 8% of the population having addiction issues and another 39% affected by them, the community agreed that **substance abuse** continues to present significant challenges in Catawba County. Some accomplishments have included implementing a Family Day to encourage families to eat together in hopes of reducing high risk behaviors, helping providers navigate the substance abuse system in order to link people with necessary resources, and creating community information pamphlets. An upcoming project will assess existing businesses and their workplace programs for substance abuse or the need for having one. These programs provide education, resources, and support for employees struggling with an addiction.

*"Keeping the Spirit Alive Since 1842!"*



While the other three health areas were already existing health priorities, cancer was a new focus of concern. Maria Reese, Healthy Carolinians Coordinator said, "The data for **cancer** revealed that minority deaths from prostate cancer, white female deaths from lung cancer, and white male deaths from colorectal cancer all exceed rates when compare to state averages." Reese adds, "By selecting cancer as a priority, we hope to identify and address preventable factors that will help reduce cancer rates.

A nonprofit organization called Catawba County Health Partners will work with over 100 community members to address these health priorities through committee efforts. Anyone interested in getting involved or viewing the entire community health assessment may visit [www.catawbacountyhp.org](http://www.catawbacountyhp.org).

For more information or for a presentation to your school, civic group, church, etc... you may call Maria Reese at 828-695-5818.